The Relation of Lord Byron to the Drama of the Romantic Period

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Chapter One.

The Drama of the Romantic Period.

The types of mid-eighteenth century drama disappeared or assumed new forms under the influence of romanticism. As the force of French influence declined, the pseudo-classical play, of which Johnson's *Irene* is a specimen, lost the favor even of the few. The Elizabethanism of Rowe, apparent despite its veneer of classicism, was to be succeeded by a new and sincere revival of interest in the lesser dramatists, who had meanwhile faded almost utterly from the knowledge of play-goers. From the time of Cibber and Steele sentimental comedy had been popular, fostered as it was by the influence of Destouches, Marivaux and Nivelle de la Chaussée, and paralleled later by the sentimentalism of Sterne and Mackenzie. Even the blow dealt at this *genre* by Sheridan in *The Critic* (1779) did not immediately stop the vogue. More genuinely vital was the work of Goldsmith and Sheridan, which derives from Molière and Congreve and passes on the tradition in successive stages of weakness to the school of George Colman the Younger and Thomas Holcroft. The one addition to dramatic types made by the century was the domestic tragedy of George Lillo, which, though descended from an Elizabethan type and related to sentimental comedy, is essentially a new beginning in the dead waste of pseudo-classicism. But such tragedies of common life, often hardly more than dramatized versions of the Newgate Calendar, while an important reform in material and technique, could not raise the standard of dramatic art.[1]

During the eighteenth century the drama dwindled and expired. For it ceased truly to reflect the national life, and

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[1] For an account of the drama of this time see *The Cambridge History of English Literature,* X (1913), chap. iv.

art cannot exist independently of life. Plays therefore became a "literary by-product".[1] For a brief period at the beginning of the nineteenth century there was a revival of interest in the poetic drama, and it is with this period that I propose to deal in this chapter.

The "Gothic" novel[2] strongly influenced the new romantic drama. The fashion left its mark upon the work of many contemporary writers, including Byron, whose *Lara* especially derives directly from Mrs. Radcliffe's type of hero-villain. It was a crude but authentic manifestation of the time-spirit, and arose from a fundamental deficiency in the eighteenth century. The obtrusion of the reason into those portions of human experience properly the domain of the imagination was abnormal. The imagination, thwarted but restless, was driven forth into barren places. Rationalism produced extravagance because it failed to provide nourishing spiritual food. Not children only need Arabian romances, monkish legends, and "tales that charm away the wakeful night", for

> "something in the shape
> Of these will live till man shall be no more.
> Dumb yearnings, hidden appetites are ours,
> And *they must* have their food."[3]

From the desperate ennui of the time two avenues of escape offered, leading respectively to the remote in space or in time. Hence the popularity of tales of the Orient.[4] To people tired of tea-cups and sedan-chairs the gorgeous East held out the enticement of surprises, mystery, and horror. Hence, too, the renascence of medievalism which is the basis of the "Gothic" revival, the allurement of the remote in time. The impulse had in it the essentials of romanticism: medievalism, the appeal to wonder, the excitation of terror. At best the horrific ele-

[1] A. H. Thorndike, *Tragedy*, Boston, Houghton, Mifflin, 1908, p. 321.

[2] See Walter Raleigh, *The English Novel*, New York, Scribner, 1910, p. 221 f.; George Saintsbury, *The English Novel*, New York, Dutton, 1913, p. 155 f. On Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764) see also C. L. Eastlake, *The History of the Gothic Revival*, London, Longmans, 1872, p. 43; Leslie Stephen, *Hours in a Library*, New York, Putnam, 1904, II, 143.

[3] Wordsworth, *The Prelude* V, 504 f.

[4] See M. P. Conant, *The Oriental Tale in English Literature*, New York, Macmillan, p. 247, and for the influence of the *genre* on the drama, p. 76.

ments could be moulded into such a story as *The Fall of the House of Usher*. But the style was on the verge of absurdity, and often, as in Lewis's *Monk*, went far beyond the boundary line.

The license of the mode appeared in the drama as well as in the novel; sensational material was always in demand — ghosts, crime, and horror — and the means employed were coarse and crude. Walpole's *Mysterious Mother*[1] (1768), the earliest and most notable "Gothic" tragedy, was praised by Byron (P. IV, 339) as "a tragedy of the highest order". Coleridge[2], on the contrary, accusing Byron of insincerity, called it "disgusting, vile, detestable." The epithets are justified, for the plot has to do with incest of the most unheard-of sort. The construction of the play is wild and crude; the "Gothic" requisites, a castle falling to ruins, crime, mystery, monks, etc., are abundantly supplied. There is little regard for dramatic development and none for the portrayal of character. The catastrophe alone is pretty well managed. The blank-verse is nearly always sheer bombast.

The number of such terror-dramas was large; novels were dramatized and original plays written in the same style. Of these "Monk" Lewis's *Castle Spectre*[3] is typical. It tells of the attempt of a feudal lord to force his niece to marry him, though she preferred "a basilisk's kiss" to his. "The great run which this piece had", says Genest[4], "is striking proof that success is a very uncertain criterion of merit. . . . How anyone not destitute of sense could write such stuff is wonderful". Byron refers to the piece in *Hints from Horace* (ll. 290, note), and the lines on Lewis in *English Bards* (ll. 269 f.) form a comment on the *genre*.

But upon the stage these extreme examples of the terrific school could obtain no permanent success, for there the chief instrument for the attainment of the effect desired — the use

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[1] *The Mysterious Mother. A Tragedy.* London, 1781 (ed. Dodsley).

[2] *Table-Talk of the late S. T. Coleridge,* ed. H. N. Coleridge, 1835 II, 154.

[3] *Cumberland's British Theatre* XV.

[4] *Some Account of the English Stage,* Bath, 1832, VII, 332. Cf. *Letters of the Wordsworth Family,* ed. W. Knight, London, Macmillan, I, 114.

of suggestion — was rendered almost powerless. The stage heightened absurdities and checked the shudder afforded by solitary perusal "by the light of a candle with a very long wick".

The motive of terror was combined with that of sentimentality in many plays translated or imitated from the German. For a while the plays of Kotzebue were immensely popular. *Menschenhass und Reue* was produced in 1798, followed a year later by Sheridan's *Pizarro*[1], a weak version of *Die Spanier in Peru*. It was a great success.[2] Brandl[3] ascribes the success of Kotzebue's plays to the fact that "mechanical cleverness tells more in front of the footlights than all lyrical and philosophical refinements." This technique was employed upon themes familiar to Englishmen. The sentimentality harmonized with Holcroftian comedy. The point of view was democratic; "custom" and "positive law" were denounced in the name of nature.[4] Thus was the revolutionary thought of the period voiced; and popularity followed. Southey, whose sole experiment in dramatic form[5] combines the zeal of a republican and the immature judgment of a boy, wrote[6], "The German plays have always something ridiculous, yet Kotzebue seems to me possessed of unsurpassed and unsurpassable genius." Scott, whose first play was a translation of Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen*, pronounced wiser judgment. "The better productions of the German stage," he says[7], "have never been made known to us; for by some unfortunate chance the wretched pieces of Kotzebue have found a readier acceptance, or more willing translators, than the sublimity of Goethe, or the romantic strength of Schiller." Nor were others silent in condemnation of the furore. In the British Museum there is a satirical piece *On*

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[1] See further L. Bahlsen, "Kotzebue's Peru-Dramen und Sheridan's Pizarro", Herrig's *Archiv* LXXXI, 354 f.

[2] See Thomas Medwin, *Conversions with Lord Byron*, 1824, p. 189.

[3] Alois Brandl, *Coleridge and the English Romantic School*, London, John Murray, 1887, p. 171.

[4] C. H. Herford, *The Age of Wordsworth*, London, Bell, 1905, p. 139.

[5] *Wat Tyler, Poetical Works*, 1837, II, 1 f.

[6] *A Selection from the Letters of Robert Southey*, ed. J. W. Warner, London, 1856, I, 68.

[7] Quoted by Bahlsen, p. 379.

the Prevalence of the German Drama on the British Stage, "by a Gentleman", London, 1805[1], which is interesting as anticipating lines 580—5 of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.* The "gentleman" thus addresses Sheridan:

> "See how thy own, once verdant, laurels fade,
> Since thou canst stoop to call in foreign aid,
> Since thou canst join the tame translating crew,
> And banish Avon's bard for Kotzebue."

He also criticises the German taste for "lawless passion" which drives the "feeling soul" to frenzy, and "sensibility with sickly mien" which "heaves the deep sigh and calls the starting tear". More drastic was the attack by John Styles, whose *Essay on the Character and Influence of the Stage on Morals and Happiness* (second edition, 1807) carries on the tradition of Tertullian and Grosseteste, Prynne and Collier. He writes (p. 47), "The recent introduction of the German drama may be considered a phoenomenon in the world of dissipation. The writings of Congreve and Dryden are absolutely pure, when compared with the vile disgusting offspring of the profligate Kotzebue."

In 1798 appeared *The Rovers,* by Frere and Canning, the *Anti-Jacobin's* famous parody of the German plays.[2] It had much to do with the swift decline of the vogue towards the end of the century. The fashion of tragedy began to change. "Horrors continued to be popular," says Brandl (p. 166), "but less in the way of robbers, ghosts, and tyrants, external miseries, crass romances, and empty tirades, than in inward commotions of the soul." There are attempts at psychological analysis. This tendency is seen in Wordsworth's *Borderers* (1795—6), Lamb's *John Woodvil* (1801), Scott's *Sensuality and Revenge* (1798), and Coleridge's *Osorio.* The new psychological drama is, however, best represented by the series of *Plays on the Passions* by Joanna Baillie.

Lack of space forbids a review of all Miss Baillie's dramas. I therefore select the two praised by Byron: *Ethwald* and *De Montfort.*[3] At the foundation of Joanna Baillie's theories and prac-

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[1] First noted by Koeppel, *Eng. Stud.* XIII, 530.

[2] *The Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin,* ed. Charles Edmonds, New York, Putnam, 1890, p. 201 f.

[3] Preface to *Marino Faliero,* P. IV, 338.

tice in the drama was a reaction from the "Gothic" vogue, very similar to that which later led Byron to the "regular" drama. Byron evidently appreciated the kinship of effort between Miss Baillie and himself. There are, however, only two important references to her in his writings. He wrote to Miss Milbanke (LJ. III, 399), "She is our only dramatist since Otway and Southerne"; and to Moore (LJ. III, 197), "Women (saving Joanna Baillie) cannot write tragedy: they have not seen nor felt enough of life for it." While on the Drury Lane Committee, Byron tried to have *De Montfort* revived, but without success.[1]

Joanna Baillie's design was explained at length in an introductory discourse prefixed to the first instalment of her *Plays on the Passions*[2] (1798). She declares that the "sympathetic curiosity" with which man regards his fellow man and which makes him eager to behold the various and conflicting emotions that arise in him, and which he governs or is governed by, is a Godgiven instinct, since "in examining others we know ourselves" (p. 4). It is the mission of the drama to supply such situations as will afford opportunity for beneficial observations of passion without the need to seek them out in circumstances of real life. The drama, more than any other branch of letters, must therefore aim at "the expression of passion, genuine and true to Nature" (p. 6). The stage has often, and especially of late, wandered far from this its proper function. Poets have given their chief attention to emulation and imitation of the masterpieces of the past and "have been tempted to prefer the embellishments of poetry to faithfully delineated nature" (p. 8). They have concentrated their efforts on strong outlines of character, bold features of passion, grand vicissitudes of fortune and striking dramatic situations, "neglecting the boundless variety of nature" (p. 8). In order to offset this tendency of the stage Miss Baillie planned to "write a series of tragedies, of simpler construction, less embellished with poetical decorations, less constrained by that lofty seriousness which has so generally been considered as necessary for the support of tragic, and in which the chief object should be to

[1] P. IV, p. 337, note 1.

[2] *The Dramatic and Poetical Works of Joanna Baillie,* 1851.

delineate the progress of the higher passions in the human breast" (p. 10—11). Complementary to the tragedies there was planned a series of comedies illustrating the same passions but "in such situations, and attended with such circumstances, as take off their sublimity" (p. 11). There is very little action in the plays in order that attention may not be distracted from the central passion, and there is extreme simplicity of plot, without episode, sub-plot, or variety of any kind that could interfere with the requisite concentration.

De Montfort is a delineation of the passion of hatred. The protagonist cherishes mortal hate towards Rezenvelt who shortly before the opening of the play had spared his life. When De Montfort hears that Rezenvelt is about to marry his sister Jane, who has been attempting to bring about a reconciliation, he deliberately and cowardly murders him in a lonely forest near a convent. He is captured, but overcome with remorse and shame anticipates justice in the arms of his sister, who pronounces a tribute to his virtues, a lamentation over his one crime, and a solemn warning to others.

Were Miss Baillie's theory of tragedy tenable, *De Montfort* would certainly be a great tragedy. It exhibits the passion of ungovernable and soul-controlling hate with considerable power. By emphasizing the love of De Montfort for his sister and his consequent blind rage at the report of her betrothal to his enemy, it accounts satisfactorily for the murderous impulses which overbear all good instincts. The lack of poetry is in accord with Miss Baillie's design, and in spite of the temptations of the theme there is no bombast. The lesser characters are all given some measure of individuality. The emphasis upon a single passion, the lack of episode, directness of action, simplicity of diction, and individuality of characterization, are certainly well exemplified in this play. Its defects are those inherent in the theory according to which the play was constructed. The pruning away of all supplementary traits from "unaccommodated man" is very faulty psychology. No passion goes "sounding on, a dim and perilous way", subject to none of the cross-currents of conflicting desires nor swerving in its course at the bidding of other instincts. Moreover the attempt to exhibit the subtleties of passion through the words of the

protagonist results in an undramatic monologue during much of the time. During four acts there is almost complete lack of action, no goal towards which the purposes of the protagonist are moving; and then in hours of fury the murder is accomplished, the protagonist captured, and an edifying end is made. The setting in a German town shows the influence of contemporary fashion. A further concession is the requiem sung by the nuns over the newly covered grave (Act V, Scene i). The entire fifth act is, indeed, in a subdued "Gothic" tone. German sentimentality is apparent, with its characteristic readiness to let charitable impulses (compare the typical Fielding-esque "goodness of heart") weigh more in the estimate of a man than his pride, jealousy, and murderous hate.[1]

Ethwald, an historical play in two parts, portrays the passion of ambition. The hero is the younger son of a petty thane, who through bravery and ability comes to be commander of the Mercian army. Urged on by ambition he visits the "Mystic sisters" who look "into the stretch of dark futurity" and prophesy that he shall be king, but shall come to a dire end. He leads a successful rebellion against the old king, is crowned, engages in wars of conquest, and at last, weighed down by enormous crimes, is assassinated. This is the barest outline of the course of the long story.

The play is too long, but the passion depicted required a growth of years from vague desire to entire obsession. The debt to Shakespeare is great[2], and is an interesting illustration of the power of the native tradition in the midst of the German furore. The comments which I have made upon *De Montfort* apply also to *Ethwald.* There is the same simplicity of language, carried to a point of baldness where the least simile is welcomed. There is the same emphasis upon the central passion.

In her Introductory Discourse, Miss Baillie asked for the

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[1] Miss Baillie foresaw this ethical objection and attempted to forestall it in a concluding note (p. 104), but the impression stated in my text remains.

[2] To *Macbeth* throughout the play, especially in the cavern scene with the "Mystic sisters" and in the final attack upon the castle; to *Hamlet* in the incident of the appearance of the king's deserted sweetheart gone mad; to *King John* and *Richard III,* and possibly to Marlowe's *Edward II,* in the scenes showing the young Edward in prison.

approval rather of her friends than of posterity. Her wish has been granted. One cannot repeat to-day the praise lavished on her by some of her contemporaries. I have already quoted Byron's remarks on her dramas. Scott wrote often and generously of her, and many others echoed these great plaudits. Hazlitt was more clear-sighted. "Her tragedies and comedies", he wrote[1], "are heresies in the dramatic art. She is a Unitarian in poetry. With her the passions are, like the French Republic, one and indivisible: they are not so in nature, or in Shakespeare." Joanna Baillie is of considerable significance in the study of the Byronic drama. Her aim at dignity and simplicity of style, portrayal of passion rather than external incident, and directness of plot, is in line with the reform later advocated by Byron. Her plays are a step in the direction from superficiality to vital truth.[2]

In the dedicatory Epistle to *The Fall of Robespierre* (1794) Coleridge admits the influence of the sensational drama, his aim being "to develope the characters of the chief actors on a vast scale of horrors".[3] This he fails signally to accomplish. The play shows, along with some obvious imitation of Shakespeare, a tendency to rhetorical declamation, a portrayal of the type rather than the individual, and a concentration of the action immediately before the catastrophe, with narrative exposition of earlier events, which betray French influence. Philosophically it is of its time, and should be compared with Southey's *Wat Tyler* and Wordsworth's *Borderers*. The latter play depicts the passion of jealousy. Schiller is the inspiration of its plot and form, Godwin of its philosophy. Individualism, democracy, the revolt from social conventions, and the return to nature, are its themes.[4] To the power of Schiller, Coleridge

[1] *Lectures on the English Poets,* London, Dent, p. 147.

[2] For convenient analyses of Joanna Baillie's plays see Genest, VIII, 333 f.

[3] *Complete Poetical Works,* ed. E. H. Coleridge, Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1912, II, 495.

[4] *Poetical Works,* ed. W. Knight, London, Macmillan, 1896, I, 112 f. Though written in 1795—6, and therefore important for the study of Wordsworth's development, this play was not published till 1842. It has therefore no significance for the study of Byron's dramas. On the influence of Schiller, especially *The Robbers,* see Th. Rea, *Schiller's Dramas and Poems in England,* London, Unwin, 1906, p. 22 f.

bore testimony in the sonnet *To the Author of "The Robbers"*, in a note to which he tells how he read the play for the first time on "a Winter midnight — the wind high. . . . The readers of Schiller will conceive what I felt. Schiller introduces no supernatural beings; yet his human beings agitate and astonish more than all the *goblin* rout — even of Shakespeare."[1] It was at the height of the German furore that Coleridge translated *The Piccolomini* and *The Death of Wallenstein*, which perhaps rank with Schlegel's *Shakespeare* among the greatest of translations.

Coleridge's most notable play shows a blending of several influences, but it is to be classed with the *Plays of the Passions* as an effort to portray the power of overwhelming emotion. *Osorio* was written in 1797, "expressly for the stage, at the instigation and with the encouragement of Mr. Sheridan, by whom, however, it was not deemed suitable for that purpose."[2] In 1813 it was remodeled and produced at Drury Lane, under the title of *Remorse*,[3] when it had considerable success. Byron was largely responsible for this production.[4] The play stands out in pleasing contrast to the typical stage-play of the time. There are in it numerous passages of genuine and beautiful poetry. It won Byron's support chiefly from its attempt to depict tragic passion, not horrific incident. The error is made of singling out one passion and portraying it as almost wholly unrelated to the complex mass of rival emotions and traits that together make up human nature. The emphasis upon motive is that afterwards adopted by Byron, and the consequence of this emphasis is the same in both cases — almost complete stagnation of the action through long stretches of dialogue.[5] The real action is spiritual, the progress towards remorse of the protagonist's soul. Hence the play at once lost

[1] *Complete Poetical Works* I, 72.

[2] *Dramatic Works of S. T. Coleridge*, ed. Derwent Coleridge, p. v. Cf. *Complete Poetical Works*, II, 812.

[3] Both versions are included in *Complete Poetical Works*, II, 518 f. and 812 f.

[4] Wordsworth erroneously ascribed its production to "the kindness of Mr. Sheridan": *Poetical Works*, I, 113.

[5] Two of the situations are dramatically satisfying: Act II, Sc. ii; Act IV, Sc. i.

control of the stage. But this very introspection must have been a factor in winning the approval of Byron. Coleridge did not despise the "Gothic" trappings of the terrific school, and he introduces incantation, paynims, castles, caverns, dungeons, etc. *Remorse* shows also the influence of Schiller[1] and Shakespeare.[2] With this romanticism there is mixed a rather incongruous politico-philosophic strain characteristic at once of Coleridge and of the period. Byron welcomed *Remorse* as the best play "for very many years" (LJ. III, 191), and so it was. Its dignity, its lack of bombast, its real and high poetic merit, its refusal to accumulate horrors on horror's head even while complying with the taste of the time, its aim to present motive instead of mechanical action, to portray, however imperfectly, the struggles of human volition, — all put it on a relatively high level of achievement.

Coleridge's second attempt to win success upon the stage was a failure. At Byron's suggestion that a tragedy might be welcomed by the public (LJ. III, 191), *Zapolya* was submitted to the Drury Lane Committee, but was rejected.[3] The interval of twenty years between the first and second acts destroys the continuity of the action. This Coleridge realized, and sought to shelter himself behind a comparison with *The Winter's Tale* and by dividing the play into two parts. The piece is not without merit. It is a typically romantic play, the action passing in Illyria during the Middle Ages; but it avoids the customary mechanical accessories of the "Gothic" drama. The inspiration of the play is Shakespearean, superficially obvious by the large borrowings from *Cymbeline, As You Like It, The Winter's Tale,* and *The Tempest,* but seen also in the undertone of love and beauty and ripe experience, which connects it with the latest plays of Shakespeare.

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[1] From Schiller's *Ghostseer* (the source of Byron's *Oscar of Alva*) Coleridge took the story of the man who murders his brother to obtain his bride, but in *Osorio* the victim escapes and returns (as in *The Robbers*). See Brandl, p. 168; cf. Rea, p. 24 f. A like motive is used in Beddoes' *Death's Jest-Book.*

[2] Shakespearean reminiscences abound; there is little direct borrowing.

[3] Cf. LJ. V, 442, and cf. James Gillman, *Life of Coleridge,* London, 1838, I, 266 f.

When *Zapolya* was found not "feasible", Maturin's *Bertram*[1] was accepted in its stead, largely through the good offices of Scott and Byron. The latter wrote to Moore (LJ. IV, 90), "I take some credit to myself for having done my best to bring out *Bertram*," and he considered Maturin "a very clever fellow." It is better fitted than *Zapolya* for the stage though infinitely below it in poetic merit. The action is direct and swift, the style in harmony with the prevailing mode. Despite the extraordinary accumulation of "Gothic" accoutrements, amounting almost to a caricature of the class, there is a feeling for the fundamental springs of emotion for which one would look in vain in the plays of Lewis. The play is essentially Byronic in its unrestrained sweep of passion; the protagonist is another Lara, though Maturin borrowed the hero-villain type not so much from Byron as from Mrs. Radcliffe, in whose books he quarried along with Byron. Of Maturin's later work Byron thought little. *Manuel*[2] he called "the absurd work of a clever man" (LJ. IV, 137), "as heavy a nightmare as was ever bestrode by Indigestion" (LJ. IV, 151).

The success of *Remorse* caused a revival of the poetic drama in which several streams of influence merged. This was furthered by the genius and popularity of Edmund Kean, who made his first London appearance in January, 1814. For several years there was a temporary compromise between literature and the stage. Younger playwrights were encouraged; taste was improved to an extent which made the presentation even of Byron's dramas a matter of financial speculation despite his own vigorous opposition. It gave Shelley arguments for the success of *The Cenci*. "I am exceedingly interested", he wrote[3], "in the question of whether this attempt of mine will succeed or no. I am strongly inclined to the affirmative at present, founding my hopes on this, that as a composition, it is certainly not inferior to any of the modern plays that have

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[1] *Bertram; or the Castle of St. Aldobrand. A Tragedy. . . . By the Rev. R. C. Maturin.* Oxberry's edition, London, 1827.

[2] See John Doran, *Their Majesties' Servants*, Boston, Niccolls, III, 303 f., for an account of the failure of *Manuel* on the stage.

[3] *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Roger Ingpen, London Pitman, 1909, II, 698.

been acted, with the exception of *Remorse;* that the interests of the plot is [*sic*] incredibly greater and more real", etc. Even Keats, though he acknowledges his ambition "to make as great a revolution in modern dramatic writing as Kean has done in acting"[1], must have been encouraged in the composition of *Otho the Great* by the thought that the poetic drama was coming into its own. To the same innovation may be traced the successes of Bulwer-Lytton twenty years later. With the failure of Browning's *Blot on the 'Scutcheon* in 1843 the revival of romantic tragedy came to an end. Now at length in our own day there begin to be fitful signs of its reappearance.

Among the writers of poetic dramas who came into some prominence after 1816 was Henry Hart Milman. Byron had at one time a high opinion of Milman's poetic powers, though he distrusted his politics and profession. Of many references to him, the following are the more notable. "Milman will *do,* if he don't cant too much, nor imitate Southey: the fellow has poesy in him; but he is envious, and unhappy, as all the envious are. Still he is among the best of the day" (LJ. V, 362). "They have brought out *Fazio* with great and deserved success at Covent Garden: that's a good sign" (LJ. IV, 210). *The Fall of Jerusalem* Byron thought a "very noble" poem, adding "I greatly admire Milman" (LJ. V, 54). Later "the impression that Milman had influenced Murray against continuing the publication of *Don Juan*" and "the mistaken belief that it was Milman who had written the article in the *Quarterly* which 'killed John Keats'" occasioned the virulent attack upon the "poet-priest" in a famous passage of *Don Juan.*[2]

Fazio[3] is the story of a wronged woman, who in sudden jealousy betrays the fact that her husband's wealth was acquired by robbery. The momentary impulse past, she pleads for her husband's life. But it is too late; he is executed, and the play ends with the widow's denunciation of her rival, and her death. The play won success on the stage. Indeed even today an actress of power might succeed in the part of Bianca.

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[1] *Letters of John Keats,* ed. H. B. Forman, London, Reeves and Turner, 1895, p. 364.

[2] *Don Juan* XI, 58 and note 1; P. VI, 445.

[3] *Poetical Works of . . . H. H. Milman,* 1839, III, 117 f.

In *Fazio* many of the qualities approved by Byron are present; but its virtues are mainly negative. The passionate subject is handled with notable restraint; the advance of the action is regular and the construction logical; the characters are consistently, if feebly, drawn; the verse, though containing no poetry of great merit, is correct and pure. There is a praiseworthy moderation of tone at a time when extravagance was the fashion.

The Fall of Jerusalem[1] is founded largely on Josephus. It presents only the last stages of the siege and culminates in the capture of the city. There is no division into acts, but merely a succession of scenes in and near Jerusalem. There is an occasional chorus, and the characters break now and then into lyrical measures. The influence of Greek tragedy is obvious. The fact that it followed what Byron considered "the best models" for dramatic composition, that it was confessedly not designed for the stage, that there was an effort at compression of time, and that the subject was historical, all are reasons for Byron's commendation of the play.

Among the "intellectual children" of *Remorse* by far the most important is *The Cenci.* Byron's comments upon this great play are disappointingly meagre and unappreciative. To Hoppner he wrote (LJ. V, 74), "His tragedy is sad work; but the subject renders it so", and to Shelley himself (LJ. V, 268), "I read *Cenci* — but, besides that I think the *subject* essentially *undramatic,* I am not a great admirer of our old dramatists *as models.* I deny that the English have hitherto had a drama at all. Your *Cenci,* however, was a work of power and poetry". Shelley's comment on this criticism was made in a letter to Leigh Hunt. "Certainly", he wrote[2], "if *Marino Faliero* is a drama, *Cenci* is not — but that between ourselves." How account for Byron's curiously warpt judgment of the greatest play of the century? It is explicable on several grounds. (i) *The Cenci,* though it preserves admirably the essential unity of interest, is not written in accordance with a narrow interpretation of those dramatic laws which Byron considered irre-

[1] *Loc. cit.,* I, 1 f.
[2] *Letters,* II, 910.

fragable. There are only three more scenes than in *Marino Faliero,* but the fourth act passes at the Castle of Petrella, not in Rome. Yet the spirit of the unity of time is preserved, for there is a compression which enables the historical events of more than a year to pass in a few days. (ii) The Elizabethan inspiration is very apparent. The scene in the castle after the murder owes something to *Macbeth,* the curse of the Count on Beatrice is modeled upon Lear's curse, Giacomo's comparison of the dying lamp to his father had its source in *Othello.* Bates thinks he detects indebtedness to Middleton's *Changeling.* The trial of Beatrice certainly resembles that in Webster's *White Devil* (III, i).[1] Such marks of indebtedness to the "set of mountebanks" of course met with Byron's condemnation. (iii) *The Cenci* deals with an abnormal situation, not with average humanity. Here it differs utterly from the Byronic historical plays. Count Cenci is impossibly wicked; he is one of those "outrageous ranting villains" whom Byron expressly abjured. He closely resembles, but in even more exaggerated form, the heroic-villains of the romantic drama, Bertram, Oswald, Conrad, and so many more. (iv) In spite of his own hostile attitude towards the priesthood, Byron was probably suspicious of Shelley's representation of the clergy and certainly objected to his blatant atheism. (v) More technical objections may have occurred to Byron — the substitution of favorite abstract ideas embodied in realistic form for true objective characterization[2], the theatrically impossible length of some of the soliloquies, the halting nature of the action — but to have specified them would have been to expose himself to the same charges. All this explains, but it does not justify, Byron's adverse criticism of the play. His opinion remains a striking instance of failure to do justice to a great work; but it must be added that Byron told Medwin (p. 95) that *The Cenci* was "perhaps the best tragedy modern times have produced."

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[1] E. S. Bates, *A Study of Shelley's Cenci,* New York, The Columbia University Press, 1908, p. 54 f., where minor parallelisms will also be found. In my discussion of *The Cenci,* I am in several instances indebted to this monograph.

[2] There are critics (e. g. Mr. Clutton-Brock) who consider *The Cenci* almost as thorough an allegory as *Prometheus Unbound.*

The Cenci is one of the large number of plays that show the increasing strength of the native influence. In his preface Shelley wrote, "Our great ancestors the ancient English poets are the writers, a study of whom might incite us to do that for our own age which they have done for theirs." The revival of interest in the lesser Elizabethan dramatists is an important factor in the romantic drama. Throughout the "German" furore the plays of Shakespeare had remained popular, and the pages of Genest record an endless series of revivals. Otway, too, was occasionally performed, as were one or two of the old comedies. Something of the spirit of the old drama begins to come back into the many imitations towards the close of the eighteenth century. William Godwin's *Antonio* was produced by Kemble in 1800, but had no success at all.[1] It is heavy and uninspired and is of historical interest only as an early attempt at the style of the old dramatists. Its successor, *Faulkner* (1807), was equally dull and was never performed.

The Elizabethan revival can be dated from the publication of Lamb's *Specimens of the Dramatic Poets* (1808). It was furthered by Coleridge's lectures in 1810 and later years. Gifford's editions of Massinger, Jonson, and Ford, and his comments on other dramatists, aided in spreading knowledge of these half-forgotten poets. The lectures of William Hazlitt (1817—1821) were also of importance.

Lamb's influence upon the drama was almost wholly due to his ability as a critic, exerted historically in commentaries upon Elizabethan and Restoration plays, and practically in criticisms of current theatrical productions. At his best, as in the great essay *On the Tragedies of Shakespeare*[2], his work, especially in appreciation of nice distinctions of character and motive, is almost unsurpassed, though his thought never reaches the profundity of Coleridge. His experiments in dramatic composition are of little value. *John Woodvil*[3] (1802), the best of his plays, might be classed with the *Plays of the Passions*

[1] Cf. Doran, III, 298.

[2] *Collected Works of Charles Lamb*, ed. A. Ainger, New York, Armstrong, 1890, II, 220 f.

[3] *Ibid.*, II, 25 f.

in that it is a study of the workings of a single passion, but its historical interest is greater as one of the early essays in the old style. The intermixture of prose and verse, the use of archaic words and phrases, the lax construction, the employment of types in the *dramatis personae,* are the signs of this Elizabethanism.[1] The piece may be described as feebly good. Lamb's other plays need not here be considered at all.

This tentative stage in the revival of the Elizabethan style passed and the movement gathered force. It is evident in Coleridge's plays, and still more so in Keats's *Otho the Great* and his fragment of *King Stephen.* These are both of secondary importance among Keats's works, serving chiefly to show the strength of the attraction of the stage for the poets of the time; and as both remained unpublished till Lord Houghton's volume of 1848, it is unlikely that Byron so much as knew of their existence. The strange manner in which *Otho the Great* was written (C. A. Brown outlined the action and characters, scene by scene, and Keats endowed his purposes with words)[2] makes it unlikely that Keats proceeded on any definite plan of composition or according to any dramatic theory, but the inspiration is distinctly Elizabethan. Were one ignorant of the method of composition employed, it would be easier to take the piece quite seriously. *King Stephen* is a fragment of fine promise, and in versification and imagination of almost Shakespearean richness.

With Procter the Elizabethanism becomes very definite. He is a disciple of Fletcher. Of *Mirandola* (1821), his only tragedy, Byron wrote (LJ. V, 217), "I just see . . . that there is a new tragedy of great expectation, by Barry Cornwall. . . . I liked the Dramatic Scenes. . . . I think him very likely to produce a good tragedy, if he keep to a natural style, and not play tricks to form Harlequinades for an audience. . . . If I had been aware that he was in that line, I should have spoken of him in the preface to *Marino Faliero:* he will do a World's wonder if he produce a great tragedy." But when Procter sent him a copy of *Mirandola* Byron's only comment

[1] Cf. Walter Pater, *Appreciations,* London, Macmillan, 1911, p. 113.

[2] See *The Poems of John Keats,* ed. E. de Sélincourt, New York, Dodd, Mead, 1909, p. 552.

was, "Barry Cornwall will do better by and bye, I dare say, if he don't get spoilt by green tea and the praises of Pentonville and Paradise Row" (LJ. V, 362). It is not remarkable that Byron showed no enthusiasm over *Mirandola,* which, though a piece of considerable merit and excellently adapted to the stage, where it had a successful "run", is constructed, as expressly stated in the Prologue, on the model of the Elizabethans. It is an Italian tragedy of passion, one of the long series from such plays as Webster's tragedies to Swinburne's *Duke of Gandia.* The story is of a father and son, rivals in love. The effect of the reaction from the bombast and extravagance of the plays produced before *Remorse* is apparent in Procter's play, which shows much moderation in tone in spite of the strained and unnatural situation. But there is lack of insight into the depths of human nature, there is no foundation in philosophy, and there is hardly any poetry except faint Elizabethan echoes, little worth, —

"A few plain words, honestly told,
Like those his mightier masters spoke of old."[1]

The *Dramatic Scenes*[2], which Byron "liked", are of less note. Only the six original scenes are of interest here; many more were published long after Byron's death. *Ludovico Sforza* tells of a woman's revenge for the murder of her lover. It is founded on fact. The central situation is copied from *The Maid's Tragedy,* Act V, Scene ii. *Lisander and Ione* is an attempt in the pastoral-mythological style, in which Landor was later successful. *Juan* is a study of sudden jealousy, and owes something to *Othello. The Way to Conquer,* a trifle, shows a magnanimous prince forgiving one who had wronged him. *The Broken Heart* dramatizes Boccaccio's story of the lover who returns home to find his mistress wedded to another. The title is borrowed from Ford. *The Falcon*[3] relates the same tale of Boccaccio afterwards used by Tennyson. Procter's piece is

[1] Prologue, p. vi. There is some resemblance between this play and the *Paolo and Francesca* of Stephen Phillips.

[2] *Dramatic Scenes with other poems . . . by Barry Cornwall,* Boston, 1857.

[3] Compare *The Works of Lord Tennyson,* edited by his son, New York, Macmillan, 1909, VI, 219 f.

even slighter than Tennyson's. The latter poet must have seen Procter's *Falcon* though he apparently never acknowledged any debt to it.[1]

Shortly before Byron's death the result of this devotion to the older dramatists began to be apparent, and the high tide of Elizabethanism came during the decade before the emergence of Tennyson. This is really beyond the limits of the present study[2], but two more paragraphs will round out the subject. The interest and appreciation of Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley developed into the enthusiastic homage of Procter, Darley, Beddoes, and Wells. Beddoes is no mere imitator; in him one can discern essential kinship of soul with the darkest of the Elizabethans; he is a reincarnation of Webster[3]. There is no parallel during the century to the grimly grotesque strength of imagination, the great clashing epithets, the "storm and wildness" of his masterpiece, *Death's Jest-Book.*[4] It never has been, nor can ever be, popular, but by the few it will always be appreciated. It is a product of the Renascence of Wonder. There are examples of such work in Poe, *The Masque of the Red Death* for instance; and in France, in such a poem as *Une Charogne*[5] Baudelaire got a somewhat similar effect. Though more Websterian than Webster[6], Beddoes disapproved of the

[1] "Hazlitt first suggested the story as suitable for stage treatment" (*Works of Lord Tennyson* VI, 539). See further on Procter, Genest, IX, 102; *Letters of the Wordsworth Family,* ed. Knight, II, 145.

[2] The Elizabethan Revival, which I have been able barely to outline, is worthy of careful investigation.

[3] See Henry Wood, "T. L. Beddoes, A Survival in Style," *Am. Jour. Phil.* IV, 445 f.

[4] *The Poetical Works of Thomas Lovell Beddoes,* ed. Edmund Gosse, 1894, II, 1 f. *The Poems of Thomas Lovell Beddoes,* ed. Ramsay Colles, London, Routledge, 1906, p. 1 f. See also T. F. Kensall, "Thomas Lovell Beddoes", *Fortnightly Review,* new series, XII, 51 f., an article devoted almost exclusively to an analysis of *Death's Jest-Book.*

[5] *Les Fleurs du Mal,* éd. déf., Paris, Calmann-Lévy, p. 127.

[6] Beddoes has many of those succinctly sinister turns of thought which one associates with Webster. For example, recent graves, but six feet under earth, are called "the very garrets of death's town" (II, iii); the earth is called "this grave-paved star" (II. iii); ivy is "that creeping darkness" (III, iii); night is the time when

"half mankind
Lie quiet in earth's shade and rehearse death" (III, iii).

current imitations of the old dramatists. "Say what you will," he wrote[1], "I am convinced the man who is to awaken the drama must be a bold trampling fellow — no creeper into wormholes — no reviver even — however good. These reanimations are vampire-cold. Such ghosts as Marloe — Webster, etc., are better dramatists, better poets, I dare say, than any contemporary of ours — but they are ghosts — the worm is in their pages. . . . With the greatest reverence for all the antiquities of the drama, I still think that we had better beget than revive — attempt to give the literature of this age an idiosyncrasy and spirit of its own and only raise a ghost to gaze on, not to live with — just now the drama is a haunted ruin." In the preface to *The Bride's Tragedy*[2] he writes, "The Muses . . . have almost deserted the public haunt, and England can hardly boast of anything that deserves to be called a national stage."

Beddoes' fellows are of less importance and may be dismissed with a few words. George Darley's beautiful *Sylvia, or the May Queen,*[3] modeled on Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* and reminiscent of Shakespeare's fairies and of *Comus*, is, with the possible exception of Hood's *Plea of the Mid-Summer Fairies*, the best modern effort to fulfil the land once more with "fayerye". In *Thomas à Becket*[4] and *Ethelstan*[5] he experimented rather unsuccessfully in the chronicle play. He is a disciple of Shakespeare and Fletcher, as Beddoes is of Webster. The influence of Marlowe is apparent in the eastern pomp, the gorgeous language, and the titanic conception of Wells' *Joseph and his Brethren.*[6]

I have now traced to its consummation this important element in the Romantic drama. It is the very antithesis of Byron's plays, yet like them it is a movement of reform. And

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[1] *The Letters of Thomas Lovell Beddoes,* ed. Edmund Gosse, London, Elkin Mathews and John Lane, 1894, p. 50 f.

[2] *Poems,* ed. Colles, p. 455.

[3] *Poetical Works of George Darley,* ed. Ramsay Colles, London, Routledge, p. 81 f.

[4] *Ibid.* p. 207. Mr. Colles owns a copy of the play given by Darley to Tennyson, but I have observed no indebtedness in *Becket* to *Thomas à Becket.*

[5] *Ibid.* p. 325 f.

[6] Charles Wells, *Joseph and his Brethren,* London, Frowde, 1908.

it was in harmony, as Byron's foreign theories never were, with the instincts of the British people. The modern poetic drama, if it is to exist at all, must fuse these tendencies, must have something of the classic strength, restraint, and regularity of design, which were the ideals of Byron in his dramatic experiments, and something of the wealth of imaginative poetry, which was apparently beyond his grasp but which alone, as in the case of Beddoes, will not result in great drama.

The closet drama, as stated above, was of increasing importance during the Romantic period. Several of the plays already considered were either not intended for the stage or unsuccessful thereon. Others, now to be mentioned, come under the class rather of "dramatic poems" than of real dramas. *Count Julian*[1] was apparently the only one of Landor's dramatic pieces that came under Byron's notice[2]. Landor himself noted that his "poems in dramatic form" were "no better than *Imaginary Conversations* in metre."[3] *Count Julian* has almost as much obscurity as *Gebir,* the result of a desire to attain an absolute austerity of diction, a classical restraint pushed to its furthest bounds. The reader must have previous knowledge of the story; that requisite complied with, it is possible to admire the subtle delineation of character expressed in compact and polished verse. But most people knew, and know, nothing of

> "The Father by whose wrong revenged, his land
> Was given for sword and fire to desolate."[4]

The appeal of *Count Julian,* as of almost all Landor's poetry, is therefore very limited. It represents the extreme of the reaction from the stage; the closet drama has wandered so far from its source as to cease to be drama at all.

In the preface to *Marino Faliero* (P. IV, 388), Byron wrote, "There is dramatic power somewhere, where Joanna Baillie,

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[1] *The Works of Walter Savage Landor,* 1853, II, 503 f.

[2]) Bryon's only reference to the play (omitted through an oversight from Mr. Coleridge's Index) occurs in a note to the last line of the Dedication of *Don Juan,* P. VI, 9.

[3] *Works,* p. 503.

[4] Swinburne, *Song for the Centenary of Walter Savage Landor,* stanza 13, *Poems,* New York, Harper, 1904, V, 14.

and Milman, and John Wilson exist. *The City of the Plague* and *The Fall of Jerusalem* are full of the best 'matériel' for tragedy that has been seen since Horace Walpole, except passages of *Ethwald* and *De Montfort*." I have touched on all these plays except John Wilson's *City of the Plague*[1]. This pathetic and beautiful poem, though full of genuine tragic feeling, is hardly a real drama. There is no development of character or situation, no progressive action, no protagonist, no catastrophe. It is a succession of historical scenes portraying incidents of the great pest. Two naval officers, Frankfort and Wilmot, come to London to seek the former's mother. She is found dead already. Magdelene, Frankfort's betrothed, is discovered in the city, a ministering angel to the dying and bereaved. The two lovers meet only to die together and to receive quiet burial at the hands of the faithful Wilmot and an aged priest. Despair in all its forms is portrayed, seeking distraction in the prophecies of an astrologer, or in impious revels, or in the crowded streets, or in the sight of the terrible pit; while brightly against the dark London streets and churchyards there shine far-off glimpses of Magdelene's home, the hills and lakes of Westmoreland. The piece lacks inspiration; the imagination seems forced; it does not strike to the roots of terror or of love. Yet as a tribute to self-sacrifice it is a worthy performance, far from deserving the oblivion that has overtaken it. Byron commended it because of its choice of an historical subject, its lack of exaggeration in spite of a theme which lent itself easily to fantastic treatment, its careful composition, and its unsuitability for the stage.

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[1] *The Works of Professor Wilson . . . edited by Professor Ferrier*, 1858, XII, 75 f. *The City of the Plague* is founded upon Defoe's *History of the Plague*, though the chief characters have no analogues in the source. The incidents of the play — the astrologer, the revels, the portents in the skies, such as the line of hearses seen along the clouds, the lunatics running through the streets and sometimes jumping into the pit, the ghosts in the churchyards, the special horror of the Aldgate pit — these and other scenes are found in Defoe's crowded narrative. But the poet has not improved upon his original; the *History* remains the more terrible and the more impressive description of the pest, equaled, if at all, in English (for I leave aside Thucydides and Boccaccio), only by the narrative of the Naples plague in *John Inglesant*.

It is difficult to classify the plays of Sir Walter Scott since he made experiments in nearly every *genre*. His dramas are the least notable part of his achievement, but are not absolutely negligible. Byron must have known of the existence of some of them, but they made no impression on him. Scott's first experiment in dramatic form was a translation of Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen* (1799), followed the same year by *The House of Aspen*, a prose drama strongly influenced by Goethe and following the traditional methods of the terrific school. At this time, be it remembered, Scott was associated with M. G. Lewis and almost in the position of a disciple. But in December, 1801, he wrote[1], "*The Plays of the Passions* have put me entirely out of conceit with my Germanized brat; and should I ever again attempt dramatic composition, I would endeavour after the genuine old English model." Nevertheless his next attempt was "after" no genuine model of any kind, but was a frankly "illegitimate" composition[2]; *The Doom of Devorgoil*[3] is a melodrama with serio-comic goblins and other supernatural accessories, and the usual accompaniment of songs. It lay for long in manuscript, till, in 1826, it occurred to Scott that "the goblin drama" might be published to help his creditors[4]. It is quite worthless. *Halidon Hill* (1822) was written for a miscellany edited by Joanna Baillie, but when found too long for that purpose, was offered to Constable, who gave Scott a thousand pounds for it. More than any of the other plays it shows what Scott might have done in this line, with care and time and training.[5] It is a clearly drawn historical sketch, full of stirring sentiments and rapid movement. *Mac-*

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[1] J. G. Lockhart, *Life of Scott*, London, J. B. Millet Co., II, 63.

[2] The "melo-drama", a new form of dramatic entertainment, was introduced into England from France. It was a medley of dialogue and music, with themes varying from farce to tragedy with more than Elizabethan license. Tales of adventure (many taken from Scott), of terror, and of mystery were drawn upon for materials. The *genre* is of negative importance in this study in that more than anything else it disgusted Byron with the English stage (Cf. LJ. II, 350).

[3] *The Complete Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. J. L. Robertson, London, Frowde, 1894, vol. V. (Contains the four poetical dramas.)

[4] Lockhart, VIII, 193.

[5] Cf. Thorndike, p. 350.

duff's Cross is the dramatization of but a single incident, to supply the promised contribution to Miss Baillie's collection. Finally, *Auchindrane*, a composition which Lockhart (IX, 297) considered "far superior to any of his previous attempts of that nature", was written in 1830. It is a tale of domestic tragedy and persecution and belongs in the same general class with *Werner*.

The works of two men must now receive a passing glance, not for their own merits but because of their connection with Byron. The Rev. George Croly (the "very Reverend Rowley Powley" of *Don Juan* XI, 57) was one of Byron's earliest and most successful imitators, and in turn seems to have in a slight degree influenced Byron[1]. A reference to "Cambyses' roaring Romans" in *Don Juan* (XI, 58) is an indication that Byron had read Croly's one play, *Catiline*[2], a version of his conspiracy and death infinitely inferior to Ben Jonson's, to which, however, it owes little, though the debt to Shakespeare is great[3]. It follows Byron in its exaltation of liberty and curious mixture of aristocratic and democratic sentiments, but it is of little consequence. And of even less note is the work of William Sotheby. In 1814 he published *Five Tragedies*, of which Byron thought *Orestes* the best[4]. He wrote cordially to Sotheby several times, and through his influence *Ivan* was accepted at Drury Lane. Genest (X, 233) says, "Some parts of this T[ragedy] are well written, but on the whole it is an indifferent play — it was rehearsed 3 or 4 times at Drury Lane, but laid aside, as Kean said he could make nothing of the character of Ivan — Kean was right". Byron expressed regret at this *impasse* and, when Maturin's *Manuel* failed, he wrote

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[1] S. C. Chew, Jr. "Byron and Croly", *Modern Lang. Notes* XXVIII, 201 f.

[2] *Poetical Works of Rev. George Croly*, London, n. d., II, 1 f.

[3] Especially to *Julius Caesar*. Catiline is incited to the conspiracy by means of a letter sent anonymously; like Brutus he walks in his garden; his wife is a crude copy of Portia; prodigies are seen in the sky before the rebellion breaks out; two of the rebel leaders quarrel before a battle in which they are defeated; the mob is like those in Shakespeare's Roman plays.

[4] "Sotheby, with his damned *Orestes*,
(Which, by the way, the old Bore's best is)" (LJ. IV, 159).
This couplet is given differently in the *Jeu d'Esprit* (P. VII, 48), and in a third version by Mr. Prothero (LJ. III, 62, note 1).

(LJ. IV, 95), "The failure of poor M's play will be a cordial to the aged heart of Saul[1] who has been 'kicking against the pricks' of the managers so long and so vainly — they ought to act his *Ivan*." He told Rogers (LJ. IV, 97) that Sotheby "was capriciously and evilly entreated by the Sub-Committee about poor dear *Ivan*, whose lot can only be paralleled by that of his original — I don't mean the author, who is anything but original."

Finally, two dramatists who won notable success upon the stage must be mentioned. Throughout the period those plays which were most successful on the stage are historically of least importance. They were purely ephemeral. Only one thoroughly successful playwright even approaches the domain of letters. This is J. S. Sheridan Knowles. His most important play was *Virginius*[2], which owes much to Webster's *Appius and Virginia*, though it suffers in comparison with it[3]. His plays are chiefly on classical or historical subjects. It is of interest to note why a man of mediocre taste and little poetic ability prospered on the stage where men greatly his superiors had failed. This was due, in the first place, to his practical acquaintance with the theatre. He had been an actor and knew at first hand the requirements of the stage. Moreover Knowles centred his interest in common emotions. In the third and fourth decades of the century the fervor of Romanticism was on the wane and the desire for the portrayal of extraordinary passions was not so strong as the appeal to what Horne[4] called the "domestic feeling", which was part of the spirit of the age and which increased in strength during the mid-Victorian period. Here the simplicity and lack of subtlety in the work of Knowles acted in his favor. He was a mean between the superficialities and rant of stage hacks on the one hand, and the nice psychology and metaphysics of the closet dramatists on the other.

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[1] Sotheby, the allusion being to his poem *Saul*.

[2] *Dramatic Works*, London, 1856, I, 59 f.

[3] See H. B. Baker, *The London Stage: Its History and Traditions*, London, W. H. Allen and Co., 1889, I, 226 f.

[4] R. H. Horne, *A New Spirit of the Age*, London, Frowde, 1907, p. 304.

R. L. Sheil is the same type of writer. His *Evadne*[1] shows a like dependence upon a Jacobean model (Shirley's *The Traitor*) and a like familiarity with the stage. Both Knowles and Sheil point forward to the later successes of Bulwer-Lytton.

From the consideration of all the foregoing dramas and dramatists some general conclusions shall now be attempted; and such as are arrived at shall be applied specifically to the dramas of Byron.

At the beginning of the last century a new audience had been attracted to the theatres. Till then the low classes had generally preferred more "manly" amusements — prize-fighting, cock-fighting, and the like; and the theatres had appealed to a more educated public. But as the lower orders became less blind and brutal the managers found it profitable to cater to their tastes, and the standard of theatrical productions inevitably deteriorated. But the typical stage plays carried the seed of their own destruction. The craze of one decade became the laughing-stock of the next; "Monk" Lewis parodied his own style, and Genest (IX, 318) records a farce called *The Sorrows of Werter, or Love, Liquor and Lunacy.*

The stage of Byron's time did not reflect the varying emotions of the period. At a time of general social unrest, when the Tories were sowing the wind to reap the whirlwind of 1832, with agitation caused by the Union, by legislation against Roman Catholics, by the economic revolution and labor unrest, by a restricted and unfair suffrage, by the spectacle of Napoleon dominating Europe and threatening to engulf England — at such a time the theatre offered German sentimentality, French flippancy, and native sensationalism. One looks in vain for that sense of national pride and power which is the glory of the Elizabethan drama. The sense was not wanting in England, but it found expression in the *Waverly Novels* and in the *Sonnets dedicated to National Independence and Liberty.* In it the theatre had no share.

The experiments in dramatic composition made by the poets of the age, while but a small appendage to the great

[1] Oxberry, *New English Drama* XIV. Cf. *Quart. Rev.* XXII, 407 f.

body of romantic poetry, are more nearly in touch with the time-spirit and more nearly worthy of the traditions of the past. A number of characteristics both as to substance and technique stand out clearly.

"There is", wrote Horne (p. 313), "manifestly the strongest tendency in the present age to be dramatic. . . . To go back no further than Byron, Southey, Shelley, Coleridge, the list includes almost every author eminent in works of imagination and invention." This is the first point to be noticed about the drama of the Romantic period. Every one of the great poets of the time made one or more essays in dramatic composition.

In this whole group of plays there is found, broadly speaking, some aspect or other of revolutionary thought. The demand for liberty was sweeping over Europe; the same movement that culminated in England in the Reform Bill was at the bottom of the long struggle for a constitutional Spain, a free Greece, and a free and united Italy. This aspiration is reflected in Southey's *Wat Tyler,* in Croly's *Catiline,* and in other plays; and especially in those of Lord Byron. Since for the most part the plays considered in this chapter assert the independence of the individual, it is significant of Byron's broadness of vision that in *Marino Faliero* he undertook to present in dramatic form the yearnings of an entire people for liberty. The contrast is seen, with the crudeness of a philosophical formula, in Godwin's dramas; it permeates the early attempts of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey; it receives supreme artistic expression in *The Cenci* of Shelley. Pushed to an extreme it resulted in the crude license of *The Mysterious Mother,* and, when subjected to artistic control, in that philosophic defiance and trust in the self-sufficiency of the human intellect which is the central theme of *Manfred* and of *Cain.* Revolutionary thought, which, deriving from the French materialists, is the foundation of the most typical poetry of the age — *The Prelude, Childe Harold, Prometheus Unbound* — is the primary inspiration of the poetic drama.

This leads to a third point. Interest in the struggle of the peoples for freedom and social betterment makes for a choice of historical subjects. This is especially apparent in Byron; but it caused Scott to dramatize subjects from Scottish

history, and in varying degree it influenced Landor, Southey, Shelley, Keats, Milman, Wilson, Croly, and others. This choice of themes was of course furthered by the traditions of the English chronicle play. Italian subjects were very popular, partly because of the example of many Elizabethan plays, partly because Italy was the abode of the chief of living poets, but mainly because of the inherent fascination of the country, which influenced Byron, Shelley, Milman, Croly, Procter, and others, and to which at a later date Landor, Browning, Swinburne and many more have paid their tribute of praise.

The poetic treatment of historic themes is in accord with the revival of interest in the Middle Ages, which is so striking a "note" of the time. Romanticism is all-powerful. The domestic themes that had been employed in a number of plays during the preceding century were quite ignored. None of the poets turned to ordinary, daily modern life for the subjects of their plays. Thus it happens that the poetic drama, though more serious than the stage-plays, was almost equally removed from life; it reflected, inadequately but not distortedly, the thought and aspirations of the age, but it did not afford a criticism of the life of the people. It was as far removed as possible from realism.

This is due, apart from the general tendency of the time, to the fact that the authors of these plays were poets in the first place, and only secondarily dramatists. The tremendous outburst of lyric poetry, intense in its individualism, stunted the growth of the drama. Hardly a poet of the time had any of the objectivity and aloofness of the supreme dramatists. This personal and lyric element, very noticeable in Byron's plays and of frequent occurrence elsewhere, accounts for the chief difference between the attitude of the romantic dramatists and that of their Elizabethan brethren. There is a substitution of spiritual for external action, an increasing interest in the psychology of situation, a growing inattention to mere plot, a new and (judging by old standards) disproportionate insistence upon motive. This is illustrated by Miss Baillie, Coleridge, and others; and especially by Byron. It reaches its climax in Browning's dramas. In *Luria,* for example, there is a minute examination and revelation of every thought and impulse from

the moment of its birth, and this in the character, not only of the protagonist but of each lesser person, as his or her deeds affect the significance of the spiritual motive which is behind the mere act.

The individualism, romanticism, and lyrism of these plays are all subordinate to a fourth characteristic. The escape from the world of reality, resulting in the selection of themes often far removed from common sympathy and interest, is a defect inherent in the great inspiration of the period — its idealism, whether expressed in Wordsworthian nature-worship, or Shelleyian visions of a golden age, or in Byron's practical encouragement and aid extended to actual revolutionaries. Directly from this idealism comes one of the great defects of the romantic drama — its absolute lack of humour. In this respect Shelley is typical. "Humour", it has been well said, "is the joyful acceptance of human imperfections". Such acceptance is never characteristic of the reformer and revolutionary zealot. Humour is always the possession of the conservative element, which seeks in it a weapon against the encroachment of new ideas. The humour of *Beppo* and *Don Juan* and Byron's matchless letters is entirely lacking in his plays[1]; there is not a trace of it in the dramas of Coleridge and Shelley; even Lamb left it behind him, save in feeble imitation of Shakespeare, when he wrote his dramas.

Some of these writers made experiments along different lines of dramatic theory. Miss Baillie's design to illustrate the various passions in a series of plays was, she thought, quite original. Byron attempted to found a "national drama" on the French and Italian model and broke away from English tradition. Shelley's desire was to adapt the Elizabethan model to the requirements of his own day. Scott and others planned a compromise between poetry and the stage. Of all these theories Shelley's was the only one that resulted in a drama of first rank; had he lived, it is not easy to set a limit to what he might have accomplished in restoring the English drama to the dignity of its heritage. This preoccupation with

[1] There is but one character in the whole group intended to be humourous (Idenstein in *Werner*) and that is a complete failure.

dramaturgic theory was accompanied by an almost utter lack of experience in stage-craft and of knowledge of technique. The writers of the Romantic drama were amateurs. Hence their enthusiasm for new theories. Hence their openness to influences. Hence the frequently faulty construction of their plays. Byron is a case in point. The partial failure of his dramatic exercises is due largely to lack of purely technical training. He and his fellow writers were further hampered by that devotion to introspection and philosophy which I have noted as one of the characteristics of these dramas. This played havoc with the construction of many of their pieces. The action is halted through long dialogues and soliloquies while the niceties of motive are discussed. Almost always the interest of the poet is obviously in the sentiments more than in the plot.

Byron's dramas can be understood properly only if they are placed in their true light with regard to the other plays of the period. They are closet dramas, never intended for the stage; they are written in accordance with a special theory of dramatic art; they express a revolt from contemporary fashions; they are concerned with the effect of situation on character rather than with the course of external incident; they are the work of a man who was poet first and dramatist afterwards; they show a lack of technical equipment; in them are found traces of various and divergent influences. Far from standing alone they are thus part of the general history of the English drama.

Chapter Two.

Byron and the Contemporary Drama.

The contemporary English stage exerted a great negative influence over Byron. I have described the chief current fashions of the drama, which I have attempted to illustrate by various plays, choosing for that purpose, wherever possible, those with which Byron was himself familiar. Disgust with the extreme license of romanticism was a leading cause, indeed, as I think, the greatest cause, of Byron's abandonment of that romanticism and reliance upon narrow laws in his attempt at

the formation of a truly national drama, of a drama of which England should not be ashamed.

During his school and college days Byron attended the theatre with considerable frequency. Of such a visit there is a record in stanzas v and vi of the poem *On a Distant View of Harrow* (P. I, 26). He saw W. H. W. Betty, "the young Roscius," of whose mediocre abilities he made a correct estimate (LJ. I, 63), and in *English Bards* he exclaims "Thank Heaven! the Rosciomania's o'er" (l. 564)[1]. Frequent allusions show his familiarity with the popular farces of the day. Twice, in 1806 and 1808, he took part in private theatricals at Southwell, for the earlier of which performances he wrote an *Occasional Prologue* (P. I, 45), following the conventional type — the request for applause or at least indulgence. Years later he wrote (LJ. V, 445), "When I was a youth I was reckoned a good actor", and Medwin says (p. 134), "perhaps Lord Byron would have made the finest actor in the world." An eye-witness of the earlier of these private performances recorded the impression that Byron acted "inimitably."[2] When only thirteen he attempted to write a drama called *Ulric and Ilvina,* apparently on the the same theme as the later *Werner*, which he had "sense enough to burn" (P. V, 338).

Byron attacked the drama in his first satire (ll. 560 f.), where he deplores "the degradation of our vaunted stage." The specific nature of the criticism shows that the lines are founded upon observation. The chief *genres* then in fashion are referred to contemptuously — "the mummery of German schools;" translations from Kotzebue, especially Sheridan's *Pizarro;* farces displaying "buffoonery's mask"; imitations of Elizabethan tragedy; melodramas; and Lewis's "spectres". Byron laments the scanty appreciation of Shakespeare, Otway, and Massinger, and the loss of George Colman and Cumberland. He exhorts Sheridan to do something worthy of his powers:

> "Give, as thy last memorial to the age,
> One classic drama, and reform the stage" (ll. 584—5).

While in the East Byron wrote *Hints from Horace,* a kind of

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[1] On Betty and the "mania" see Doran, III, chap. ix.

[2] Quoted by Mr. Prothero, LJ. I, 108, note.

supplement to *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. There are in it several remarks in disparagement of the drama. In theatres we can "dispense with common sense" and Wit is the one thing *not* employed to raise a laugh (ll. 157—60). "Lewis's self, with all his sprites" is derided, as is the taste for carnage and ghosts, "French flippancy and German sentiment" (l. 454). In this poem Byron introduces his earliest references to dramatic principles. Violent action should not take place upon the stage;

> "Many deeds preserved in History's page
> Are better told than acted on the stage;
> The ear sustains what shocks the timid eye,
> And Horror thus subsides to sympathy;
> True Briton all beside, I here am French" (ll. 267 f.).

Moreover there must be no action exceeding belief, for an event may be an historical fact, yet dramatically impossible. Pomposity and show at the expense of vitality and realism are to be avoided. The theatre should instruct as well as amuse. This is significant, for here are opinions developed early in life that afterwards appear in the three historical plays. It was evidently through no sudden caprice that Byron elected to follow the classical model. The precepts are but echoes of Horace (as the title acknowledges) and Boileau, but it is to be remarked that already Byron took "hints" from them. There is the germ of the dramatic theory later exemplified by the two Venetian plays and *Sardanapalus*. The aim is in the direction of truth to nature, decorum, and a higher moral purpose.

On his return from the East Byron took up his residence in London. He was now a constant attendant at the theatre.[1] The few criticisms of the stage contained in his letters of this period are uniformly disparaging. "Good plays are scarce", he

[1]) Among the plays which he saw before the end of 1813 were: *Coriolanus*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Richard III*, and Rowe's *Fair Penitent;* various farces and comedies such as Colman's *Bluebeard;* and at least one example of the style of melodrama founded on Scott's novels and poems, — Morton's *Knight of Snowdoun*, a musical drama taken from *The Lady of the Lake*. There are many references to other dramatists and quotations from their works. A partial list of such includes Congreve, Vanbrugh, Farquhar, Gay, Goldsmith, Foote, Rich; and of foreign dramatists, Schiller *(The Robbers)*, Alfieri, and Monti.

writes in September, 1811 (LJ. II, 34), and speaks of "our stage in its present state" where the context shows that the reference is to the English lack of regularity. His next actual work in the drama was "a comedy of Goldoni's translated, one scene," which he sent to Dallas in September, 1811 (LJ. II, 43). This has disappeared. On October 12, 1812 Byron's *Address* was spoken at the opening of the new Drury Lane Theatre. There is in it no profound dramatic criticism, but there is the same disapproval of contemporary fashions upon the stage. Byron promises better things in the future: —

> "If e'er Frivolity had led to fame,
> And made us blush that you forebore to blame —
> If e'er the sinking stage[1] could condescend
> To soothe the sickly taste it dare not mend —
> All past reproach may present scenes refute,
> And censure, wisely loud, be justly mute" (ll. 56 f.).

The *Address* is not good verse, but it is a sincere attempt to point the way to a higher dramatic standard, to "Nature for our guide," to make "the Drama be where she hath been" (ll. 72 and 24). This composition brought Byron into close touch with Drury Lane and was a factor in the choice of him as a member of the Committee of Management two years afterwards.

In 1813—14 Byron had "a box at Covent Garden for the season" (LJ. II, 334). This was the time of the Byron furore; he was writing the Eastern Tales. It is not surprising, therefore, that some newspapers declared him to be the author of an anonymous spectacular Oriental melodrama, produced at Drury Lane in November, 1813, for the costumes of which he had furnished some drawings (LJ. II, 288). His comment upon this ascription was, "I wonder what they will next inflict upon me. They cannot well sink below melodrama" (LJ. II, 350)[2]. At this time he was actually at work upon a play. In his journal for November 14 we find, "This afternoon I have burnt the scenes of my commenced comedy" (LJ. II, 314), and three days later: "I began a comedy, but burnt it because the scene

[1] This phrase had already been employed in *Eng. Bards,* l. 734.

[2] Compare *The Devil's Drive,* stanza 26; P. VII, 33—34.

ran into *reality*; — a novel for the same reason. In rhyme I can keep more away from facts" (LJ. II, 323). This last sentence indicates that, following the mode, the comedy was to be in prose, for —

"Modest Comedy her verse foregoes
For jest and pun in very middling prose."[1]

Another reason for its destruction may be found in the remark, "A comedy I take to be the most difficult of compositions, more so than tragedy" (LJ. II, 373). It is notable that at this date Byron chose for dramatic treatment the *Ethos,* not the *Pathos,* of life. Later he put his pictures of manners into *Don Juan* and selected the tragic side of existence for dramatic presentation. In 1814 he was urged by several friends to try his hand at a tragedy. On January 22 he wrote to Murray, "Before I left town Kemble paid me the compliment of desiring me to write a *tragedy*; I wish I could, but I find my scribbling mood subsiding" (LJ. III, 16). On February 20 he noted in his journal, "I wish that I had a talent for the drama; I would write a tragedy *now*" (LJ. II, 387). In an undated letter of the same year he remarked to Moore, "As it is fitting there should be good plays, now and then, besides Shakespeare's, I wish you or Campbell would write one: — the rest of 'us youth' have not heart enough" (LJ. III, 81). On July 23 Jeffrey wrote of Byron to Moore, "I want him above all things to write a tragedy"[2], upon which Byron's comment was, "Jeffrey does me more than justice; but as to tragedy — um! — I have no time for fiction at present" (LJ. III, 126).

Towards the end of 1814 Whitbread, the popular manager of Drury Lane, committed suicide. The noblemen and gentlemen who were financially interested in the theatre undertook "the absurd and perilous step" of appointing a sub-committee to manage the house. For three years these men, one of whom during 1815 was Lord Byron, "made experiments and amused themselves at the same time."[3] Byron was active and enthusiastic in his share of the work, and considered the management

[1] *Hints from Horace,* ll. 121—2.

[2] Quoted by Mr. Prothero, LJ. III, 126, note.

[3] Percy Fitzgerald, *History of the English Stage,* London, Tinsley Brothers, 1882, II, 384 f.

"really very good fun, as far as the daily and nightly stir of these strutters and fretters go" (LJ. III, 230). He was probably influenced in his decision to write a play by perusal of the tolerable and intolerable attempts that were submitted to the Committee. Long afterwards he told Medwin (p. 89), "When I first entered upon theatrical affairs I had some idea of writing for the house myself, but soon became a convert to Pope's opinion on that subject. Who would condescend to the drudgery of the stage, and enslave himself to the humours, the caprices, the taste or the tastelessness of the age?" Byron probably refers to a remark of Pope's in Spence's *Anecdotes*, which he himself quoted in a letter to Murray (LJ. V, 223): "I had taken such strong resolutions against anything of that kind, from seeing how much everybody that *did* write for the stage, was obliged to subject themselves to the players and the town." He may also have remembered lines 304—337 of the *Epistle to Augustus*. His "idea of writing for the house" went so far as the first draft of the first act of *Werner*, which was certainly at that time designed for the stage. Hoping to take advantage of the "opening for tragedy" (LJ. III, 191), Byron chose a theme suitable to the public taste. The "Gothic" setting in "a ruinous chateau on the Silesian frontier" and the period of the play, at the close of the Hundred Years' War, when Europe was infested with robber-bands of discharged soldiery, both link the play to the popular romantic drama. Ruin, storm, darkness, mystery, and misfortune are all huddled together in the first act. *Werner* avoids the extravagance of emotional horror, but it is in essentials of the school of terror. There are similarities in its elements with *Bertram*, which had recently passed through Byron's hands. The composition of *Werner* was interrupted by Byron's domestic difficulties. "I began that tragedy in 1815," he wrote later (LJ. V, 391), "but Lady Byron's farce put it out of my head for the time of her representation." When he left England the fragment was left behind and was not found until after his death. It is not strange that Byron should have commenced a play of this type in 1815; it *is* strange that after the composition of his classical dramas he should have turned again to the subject and treated it, though perhaps with more technical skill, in

all essentials as he would have finished it in 1815. The significance of *Werner* is that it is Byron's one essay in the popular mode, his one effort to meet the stage half way.

"Self-exiled Harold wanders forth again." In Switzerland the pressure of sorrow and remorse, the overwhelming presence of the mountains and the sky, the crowding associations of romantic scenery, and the companionship of Shelley combined to open the flood-gates of lyrical, egotistical commentary upon man and nature, in which there was nothing of the calm abstracted objectivity requisite for the drama. To this summer belongs *Manfred*. It is distantly related to the school of terror, but primarily it is an attempt to give objective expression to intensely subjective emotion.

Byron's thorough opposition to the stage dates from the time of his departure from England and is part of his increasing dislike of all things English. His instinct for classical "regularity," of which more shall be said, was fostered by observation of the extravagance of the stage. From the horrible he reacted to the heroic, from medieval and exotic settings to historical, from utter lack of truth to nature to insistence upon fact, from unrestrained wildness to an almost austere control, from outworn and often unhealthy harpings upon love to study of the problems of states. He frequently contrasts his conception of tragedy with that current upon the stage. Thus of *Marino Faliero* he writes (LJ. V, 167), "It is too regular — the time, twenty-four hours — the change of place not frequent — nothing *melo*-dramatic — no surprises, no starts, nor trap-doors, nor opportunities 'for tossing their heads and kicking their heels' — and no *love* — the grand ingredient of a modern play." And again (LJ. V,243), "There are neither rings, nor mistakes, nor starts, nor outrageous ranting villains, nor melodrama in it." He speaks (LJ. V, 372) of "simplicity of plot .... and the avoidance of rant." Upon the appearance of each of his plays he repeats his disclaimer of any ambition for success upon the stage, and I, for one, see no reason to doubt his sincerity[1]. Medwin and others also record this detestation

[1] The following are the chief references. P. IV, 337; P. V, 9 and 338; LJ. IV, 55, 71, and 137; LJ. V, 81, 167, 218, 221, 223, 228, 257, 295 and 304.

of writing for the stage. This attitude is succinctly expressed when he writes (LJ. V, 231), "I will never have anything to do willingly with the theatres."

In the autumn of 1816, on his way to Venice, Byron met at Milan the Italian dramatist Monti with whose works he was already acquainted. This meeting may, as Mr. Coleridge suggests, have stimulated his interest in the modern pseudo-classical Italian drama. He had been in Venice but a short time when he asked Murray to get Dr. Moore's "account of the *Doge Valiere*" transcribed for him, adding, "I mean to write a tragedy upon the subject which appears to me very dramatic" (LJ. IV, 59). But he for the time abandoned his intention, for there was little opportunity for such work in Venice. It required a complete change of surroundings to fit him for the concentrated effort of tragedy. This change came about in 1819 through his liaison with the Countess Guiccioli, by means of which, as Shelley testifies[1], Byron was "greatly improved in every respect." *Marino Faliero* advanced slowly and sometimes with discouragement, amid revolutionary plans and amatory troubles. That he was seriously essaying a new dramatic *genre* is shown by many passages in his letters. Thus (LJ. V, 218), "I am . . . fully persuaded that this [i. e. to "produce a great tragedy"] is not to be done by following the old dramatists, who are full of gross faults, pardoned only for the beauty of their language; but by writing naturally and *regularly*, and producing *regular* tragedies. . . . I have . . . tried a sketch in *Marino Faliero;* but many people think my talent *'essentially undramatic'*, and I am not at all sure that they are not right." Again he wrote (LJ. V, 347), "My dramatic simplicity is *studiously* Greek, and must continue so: *no* reform ever succeeded at first. I admire the old English dramatists; but this is quite another field, and has nothing to do with theirs. I want to make a *regular* English drama, no matter whether for the stage or not, which is not my object, — but a *mental* theatre."

Concrete examples were of more importance in Byron's mind than abstract theories. Of such examples the most in-

[1] *Letters* II, 893.

fluential were the plays of Alfieri. The Italian dramatist has, indeed, been considered by some critics as the chief cause of Byron's adoption of the classical form of drama, but this is, I think, to overestimate that influence.

Byron acquired early an acquaintance with Italian and he had not lost all command of it when he went to Italy in 1817. This previous knowledge is alluded to in various letters[1]. Moreover, it has been remarked, "wie sehr Byron auch sonst in gedanken bei den Italienern weilt, beweisen die vielen italienischen ausdrücke und citate, die sein tagebuch gerade damals aufzuweisen hat. . . . So waren denn Byron's italienische sprachkenntnisse, als er im Oktober 1816 nach Italien kam, schon ziemlich bedeutend."[2]

It were a work of supererogation to state in detail the indebtedness of Byron to the influence of Alfieri, since this has already been done by Anna Pudbres in her article "Lord Byron, the admirer and imitator of Alfieri."[3] I shall here give a summary of her results with certain restrictions, for I think she overestimates the "imitation" and even the "admiration." How, for example, would she account for the following remark, written during the composition of *Marino Faliero,* in which the influence of Alfieri is most marked? "The Italians have as yet *no tragedy* — Alfieri's are political dialogues, except *Mirra*" (LJ. V, 64).

Monti and Alfieri were mentioned in Byron's journal as early as February 20, 1814 (LJ. II, 388), when he contrasts them favourably with Schiller.[4] Alfieri's dramas are modeled upon those of Corneille and Racine. There are the simplicity of plot, the brevity of action (embracing hardly more than the catastrophe), the adherence to the unities, the lack of comic scenes, the abundance of rhetoric, and the general stateliness and monotony, which are characteristic of the French pseudo-classical drama. The marked contrast with the contemporary drama in England impressed Byron, and his admiration for the

[1] See, e g., LJ. I, 308 ("tolerably master of .... Italian").

[2] F. Maychrzak, "Lord Byron als übersetzer", *Engl. Stud.* XXI, 393. In this article the subsequent steps of Byron's mastery of Italian are traced.

[3] *Engl. Stud.* XXXIII, 40 f.

[4] See also Fuhrmann, p. 100.

Italian school is recorded in various letters. In *Childe Harold* (LJ. IV, 54), he mentions Alfieri's among those ashes which make holier the holy precincts of Santa Croce, and in a letter (LJ. IV, 114), the tomb of Alfieri, along with those of Machiavelli, Michael Angelo, and Galileo, is said to make Santa Croce "the Westminster Abbey of Italy." His letters and journals, and those of Moore and Hobhouse, record various visits to the theatre and opera at Venice. On one occasion, at a performance of *Mirra,* he burst into tears (LJ. IV, 339). He was similarly affected "a Ravenna ad una rappresentazione del *Filippo* d'Alfieri."[1] The Countess Guiccioli, Lady Blessington, and Medwin have recorded other instances of this admiration,[2] an important cause of which was probably the recurring note of the love of liberty in the writings of Alfieri.

It is going too far, however, to regard Byron as the "disciple" and Alfieri as the "master."[3] Pudbres (p. 48 f.) shows that *La Congiura de Pazzi* served in some degree as the model of *Marino Faliero,* but the resemblance of the plot of the latter play to Otway's *Venice Preserved* is even closer, and the parallelisms in structure to Alfieri's play are chiefly such as would naturally occur between plays on kindred subjects following the lines of the regular drama. In the simplicity of diction, amounting to baldness, which distinguishes *Marino Faliero* from Byron's other dramas, there is clearer evidence of the influence of Alfieri's austere style, but the excess of sheer rhetoric in both dramatists is a characteristic of all pseudo-classical plays and derives from the French tragedians and through them from Seneca. It is folly to attempt to find in Alfieri the original of the peculiarities of Byron's metre. Such as they are, and in them there is nothing very striking, they have abundant English prototypes.

Alfieri's direct influence upon *Sardanapalus* was very slight Pudbres finds evidence of borrowings from *Filippo,* the character of Myrrha resembling that of Isabella, and of Sardanapalus that of Carlo; but the traditional autobiographical inter-

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[1] LJ. IV, 339, note, quoting from the Countess Guiccioli.

[2] See Pudbres, p. 42—45.

[3] Cf. Pudbres, *passim.*

pretation of Myrrha as the Countess Guiccioli and Sardanapalus as Byron himself seems to me more nearly correct. Alfieri may have furnished hints. The name Myrrha was probably suggested by *Mirra.* Compare, however, Ruskin's suggestion[1], "Perhaps some even of the attentive readers of Byron may not have observed the choice of the three names — Myrrha (bitter incense), Marina (sea lady), Angiolina (little angel) — in relation to the plots of the three plays." This is pretty, but fanciful.

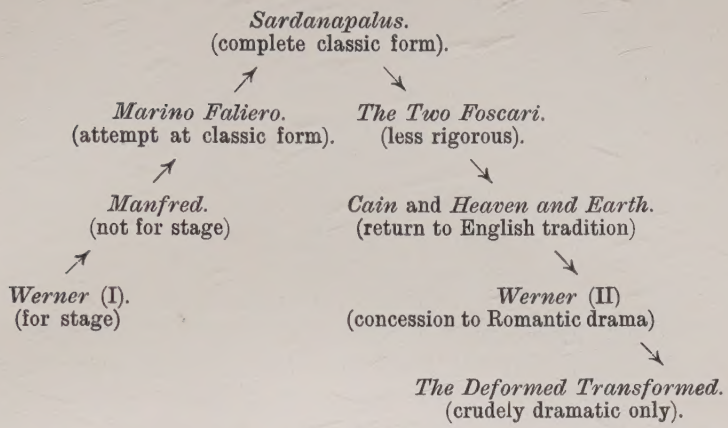
Finally it may be noted that *The Two Foscari* shows no traces of direct borrowing from Alfieri. Byron's indebtedness is, then, rather for inspiration than for direct assistance.

Sardanapalus, The Two Foscari, and *Cain* followed rapidly between January and September, 1821. The two former are further exercises in the regular drama; the last stands apart and nearer *Manfred. Heaven and Earth* is a sequel to *Cain.* The roughly dramatic form in which these two pieces are cast shows that the fascination of the drama had not passed, yet is a token of the reaction from the severe restraint that Byron had previously imposed upon himself. This reaction goes further in *Werner,* which Byron now took up once more and completed along the lines of the Romantic drama.

The Deformed Transformed, which brings to a close the series of plays, is a formless, chaotic piece, of slight value, in which it is apparent that Byron had left behind him the desire for classical form and restraint, and was discontented with the drama as a medium of expression. By this time he had fully "found himself" and was devoting his energies to his greatest work — *Don Juan.*

This survey of Byron's development as a dramatist has, I think, made clear how logical was his advocacy of the "regular" drama. It was a reaction from extravagance and formlessness. Away from England, that reaction gradually lost force, and he wrote first a play in the Romantic manner, then a semi-dramatic piece, and then ceased writing dramas altogether. The course of this development can well be illustrated by a diagram, as follows.

[1] *Fiction, Fair and Foul,* Library ed. of Works, ed. E. T. Cook and Alex. Wedderburn, London, Allen, 1903f., XXXIV, 362, note.


Sardanapalus.
(complete classic form).
Marino Faliero.
(attempt at classic form).
The Two Foscari.
(less rigorous).
Manfred.
(not for stage)
Cain and *Heaven and Earth.*
(return to English tradition)
Werner (I).
(for stage)
Werner (II)
(concession to Romantic drama)
The Deformed Transformed.
(crudely dramatic only).

Life.

I was born at Baltimore, Maryland, on August 31, 1888. After my preliminary education at the Boys' Latin School of Baltimore, I entered the Johns Hopkins University whence I was graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Arts in June, 1909. During the year 1909—10 I was Master of English at the Country School, now the Gilman School, of Baltimore. In 1910 I returned to the University as Fellow in English, was reappointed in 1911—12, and made Fellow by Courtesy in 1912—13. I received the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in June, 1913. My subjects of study in the Graduate School were English, French, and Philosophy. I followed courses under Professors Bright, Griffin, Collitz, Armstrong, Lovejoy, Terracher, and Brush, to all of whom it is a pleasure to record my many obligations. To Professor Bright I, in common with all those who have worked under his direction, owe more than can be recorded for the example that he affords of scholarship and devotion to high ideals.